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THINGS THAT MATTER

by Jonathan Wilson

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Erections matter. Thanks to modern medicine they are a recurring reality for most male members of the population. They are a cause of much mischief and a darling of the media. If you want viewership or readership, head “south.” Sometimes they seem to have a mind of their own and can be extremely hard headed at that. Too often they’re used as pointers and merely followed, blindly, like a crotch compass. Especially, as it seems, in Congress.

In the case of Congressman Gingrich it pointed away from a cancer-stricken spouse and toward a mistress, and was followed there because he loved his country too much. For Congressman Mark Foley, it was used to turn another [congressional] page, and turn Foley out of office. With a wide-stance Senator like Larry Craig, it was used to point “out” an alternate sexual orientation. In the case of Louisiana Senator Vitter, it pointed affordably to a prostitute, a profound apology, and a political comeback. The comeback was in Louisiana, however, so it doesn’t really count.

Erections can easily get out of hand, as Congressman Weiner has amply demonstrated. Thank you for sharing. As he heads into therapy, the place to start will be the merciless teasing his name has doubtless caused him to endure while trying, unsuccessfully, to grow up. At least consistent with the Congressman’s politics, his was pictured pointing left.

When deemed de minimis, they can cause swagger and the waging of improvident war, as we saw in Iraq, and innocent people died. They can also cause the construction of tall buildings, as evidenced by Trump Tower and the Ruan Center. I wonder whose rose to the occasion to build 801 Grand.

As can be seen by these paragraphs, they can be the source of almost endless double entendres and limitless hypocrisy.

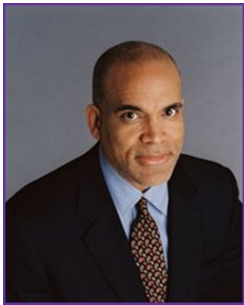
Elections matter. Three Iowa Supreme Court Justices, so far, have been martyred for our cause and the sanctity of our Constitution. They fell victim to a lynch mob that joined forces with the perpetually disgruntled 30-35% who routinely vote against retention of judges – all judges. The radically wrong, motivated by religion and organized through churches, turned out in sufficient numbers to unseat three members of a unanimous court that held to the simple principle that equal means equal. They showed us that an activated, organized, and motivated minority can carry the day when those indifferent or just “too busy” don’t get educated and go to the polls. Such a theocratic minority group can do, generally, what has undeniably been done to the Republican Party.

They, like terrorists, belong to the “ends justify the means” crowd. Commit acts of torture historically classified as war crimes – for the sake of national security – and it’s okay. Engage in political “dirty tricks” – for the sake of winning an election – and it’s okay. The non-retention campaign was the flip side of the same mentality. Not even the organizers would claim that their followers actually read the Iowa Supreme Court decision; they simply disliked the result and wanted vengeance. Their success in extracting that vengeance demonstrates how mysteriously the Lord works– the decision remains unaffected and the actual author of the opinion was thus elevated to the position of Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Erections matter. Elections matter. Little things can get bigger politically or otherwise and be made to matter. My reflections are intended to make the simple point that, if those of us to whom important, enlightened things matter, don’t get off our butts and to the polls, we’re metaphorically going to get screwed by an unholy theocracy. That’s just the way representative democracy works. Important things matter.

CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, July 1, 2011 at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by June 28 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.



Raynard Kington

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on the first Friday of June was Raynard Kington, who is completing his first year as President of Grinnell College. Dr. Kington has received extraordinary national attention in his new post, as well for his impressive professional résumé as for some details of his personal life: not only is he black, he is gay -- with a white (Greek-American) spouse and two young sons, both bi-racial. [It is likely that the family's presence here may have raised Grinnell's -- even Iowa's -- demographic diversity level by a statistically significant factor....]

Kington's presentation was fascinating and thoughtful, centered in his passionate conviction of the power of higher education to transform lives. His passion comes, he said, from having seen that transformative power work in and through the lives of his parents and grandparents, and continue in his own career. (Kington attended the University of Michigan where he received his B.S. with distinction and his M.D. degree. He completed his M.B.A. with distinction and Ph.D. from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania; he was elected to membership in the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science in 2006. Dr. Kington has been an assistant professor of medicine at UCLA and a senior scientist at the RAND Corporation, and came to Iowa from his posts as deputy director and acting director of the National Institutes of Health. He directed the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one of the largest studies of the health of the population of the United States.)

A highly amusing moment in his talk came when Kington recounted his interview process with Grinnell: a massive snowstorm forced him to arrive at the Des Moines airport at midnight, with no luggage and with Florida-vacation clothes on his back. Walmart -- the only store open -- provided as best it could (the shirt, he discovered, was short-sleeved) and it turned out to be his Lucky Outfit. He still keeps it in the closet of his presidential office.

More seriously, Dr. Kington spoke of his struggle to come to terms with being a "symbol." As Grinnell's chief spokesman, how much should he expose his own personal views on, say, the Iowa Supreme Court's decision for marriage equality (which was indeed, he said, a positive factor in attracting him here)? **Register** columnist Rekha Basu (who attended our breakfast meeting) quoted his eventual answer: "I am where I am because a lot of other people decided to change the world."

Kington's remarks in Q&A after his talk were similarly frank and engaging. Asked about how his family accepted the news of his sexual orientation, he admitted that he was not in charge there: he was rather maliciously outed to them by a former romantic rival of his mother -- a type of story that every

man present could certainly recognize, even to its eventual happy and supportive ending.

Dr. Kington proved himself a truly inspiring role model both for FFBC members and for our scholarship awardees.

The Grinnell College web site has, of course, a wealth of information on its new president. The college notes that "Dr. Kington values an inclusive management style and clear, thoughtful, and fair decision-making processes. His personal and professional lives are rooted in a deep commitment to social responsibility, and a priority for his tenure as President is strengthening the connection between academic excellence in the Arts, Humanities, Sciences, and Social Studies and our graduates' ability to go into the world and transform it.

"Dr. Kington's research has focused on the role of social factors, especially socioeconomic status, as determinants of health. His research has included studies of the health and socioeconomic status of black immigrants, demographic correlates of the willingness to participate in genetic research, the relationship between wealth and health status, the health status of U.S. Hispanic populations, and the determinants of health care services utilization."

An extensive Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Kington is available at www.grinnell.edu/files/downloads/CV_Short_Kington_2010.pdf



Image retrieved from www.lib.grin.edu

Tax breaks for the rich won't create American jobs; consumer demand creates jobs. Give tax breaks to the rich and there's no telling where it will be invested. China? South Korea? Taiwan? Supposed "trickle down" continues to be voodoo economics just as the first President Bush said. Give tax breaks to the middle class and the poor and the money gets spent, creating demand. If the demand is there, entrepreneurs will be able to justify starting or expanding a business and add jobs in the process. If the demand is there, lenders will readily lend capital needed to meet the demand. Demand is the key. "Percolating up" is the path to our prosperity.

Can Someone Please Explain This to Me?

By Bruce McCabe

We went into Afghanistan after 9/11 supposedly to kill or capture Osama Bin Laden. That has now been done, but we are still there, and our government hasn't told us when we will finally leave. Our troops are still being killed or maimed for life. I have a niece currently stationed in Afghanistan and in harm's way. We went into Iraq because of "weapons of mass destruction," later modified to "regime change." Our government lied to us. There were no WMDs and the former regime, which we sponsored at one time, has been changed. Yet our troops are still there and still risk being killed or maimed for life. We supposedly can't afford Medicare for our senior citizens and the cost of other social programs. According to the Center for Defense Information, the estimated cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will reach \$1.29 trillion by the end of fiscal year 2011. We continue to prop up corrupt governments, giving them billions and billions of dollars. These governments could not care less about implementing democracy or enhancing the rights of their citizens. At what point do we recognize the futility and insanity of exhausting our resources, both human and monetary, by remaining in those two pieces of worthless real estate? I was stationed in the Middle East when I was in the United States Air Force, and I can tell you that no amount of time, money, or the killing of "insurgents" will pacify the Taliban or other radical factions in either of those countries. We are giving billions to Pakistan and other countries who have proven they are not our genuine allies.

We need to support our troops by bringing them home and rebuilding our failed economy. We need to spend our money by creating jobs and rebuilding our infrastructure. It is unbelievable that we have our young people graduating from college unable to find jobs.

If our elected officials in Washington, D.C., can't solve our problems, we need to clean house in 2012. Whether they be Democrats OR Republicans, if they can't work for the money we are paying them, then we need to provide an opportunity for them to find other work where they might be better qualified. In case you are an elected official, either State OR Federal, reading this: among other things, YOU need to work on securing our borders. YOU need to improve our food safety. YOU need to reduce unemployment. YOU need to quit trying to deprive citizens of Constitutional rights simply because they are gay or lesbian. YOU need to find out why gasoline is moving toward five dollars a gallon when the cost per barrel of oil is down. YOU need to do something - ANYTHING about drug use. YOU need to be honest if you seek our vote and want us to believe you deserve it by keeping it zipped up and not cheating on your wives, ala Arnold S., or either of the two John E's.; and YOU need to quit stuffing campaign contributions from corporations into your pockets and WORK for the citizens of this country. You need to quit cozying up to Wall Street and

Learn to listen; opportunity sometimes knocks very softly.

rewarding it's shenanigans and start taking care of the Main Streets across this country. Either do that or get our before we vote you out. Whether you are Democrat or Republican, we are watching you, whether you realize it or not, and we will not con-

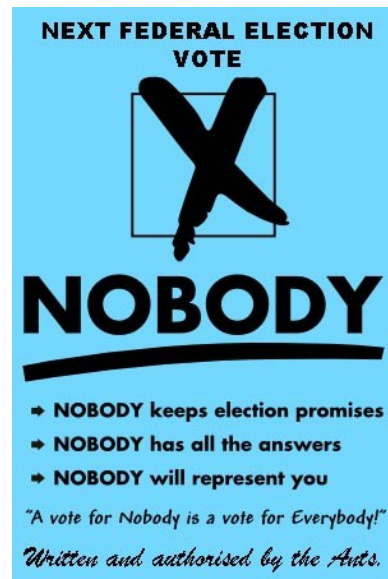


Image retrieved from militantlibertarian.org

You know you're nobody if you're in a forest, a tree falls, and you don't hear it.

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the July 1 meeting no later than June 28. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Nick Renkoski (Marketing Director), Michael Egel (Artistic Director), and selected performers from the Des Moines Metro Opera will be our guests.

▼ ▼ ▼
Thanks to Jeffrey Campbell for his introduction of our June speaker, Dr. Raynard Kington, President, Grinnell College. And thanks to Chris Correy, Scott Klinefelter, Steve Person, Mike Smith, John Tompkins, Brad Holland, Byron Huff, Michael Thompson, and Allen Vander Linden for staffing the FFBC table at the Gay Pride event on Sunday, June 12.

▼ ▼ ▼
Thanks to Arthur Breur for his work on our new FFBC brochure.

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The annual picnic is set for July 16 at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden. Details will follow.

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Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Fred Mount for coordinating the book exchange .

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views
Des Moines, Iowa*

JULY 2011

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Restricting **Accessline**

Steve Person

The atmosphere at the Iowa Capitol these days is, as Alice stated while in Wonderland, curiouser and curioser. The new secretary of state has hung a picture of Jesus in his office, the new/old governor refers to himself as “the new sheriff in town,” religious services are routinely conducted in the rotunda and other parts of the building, and freedom of the press seems to have taken a holiday.

On the first Friday of every month, I frequently see FFBC member Rick Miller delivering copies of **Accessline** to the periodical section set aside in the ground floor of the Capitol. Among the periodicals available there are **The Des Moines Register**, **Cityview**, **Juice**, **Apartment Finder**, and various newsprint-style publications, including Iowa’s gay and lesbian newspaper, **Accessline**.

The area where these publications are located is near the tour desk where I work. I spoke with Rick on June 3 after he brought his stack of papers into the building, and he commented that the newspapers frequently seem to disappear. I told him that I’d keep an eye on them as much as possible. I was scheduled to work that day from 9:15-3:15. When I left that afternoon, the **Accessline** newspapers were still there. That was the afternoon of the investiture of the new supreme court justices, and we had about 350 people in the Capitol for that occasion.

When I arrived the next day at 8:15, the **Accessline** papers were gone. Big stacks of **Cityview** and **Juice** sit right next to where the **Accesslines** were, and those more mainstream publications had hardly been touched. After a brief search, I found the **Accesslines** in the trash can next to the south elevator. They obviously had been put in there after the cleaning person had done her rounds late Friday afternoon because the papers were the only things in an otherwise pristine trash bag. I removed them and put them back on their rack.

I was not scheduled to work on the following Monday but stopped in at the Capitol around noon to see if the papers were still there. They were. When I arrived at work early Tuesday morning, the papers were once again in the trash can. I removed them once more and put them back. I did not work on Wednesday, and when I arrived on Thursday for my shift, they were gone.

I have an idea who is trashing the papers, but I have not seen this person do it. It is not the first time this spring that a group’s publications were thrown out. A television reporter caught a member of the legislature throwing brochures of a group, with whom she vehemently disagreed, into the trash and ripping down the group’s poster. So much for freedom of the press, not to mention civil behavior.

Unless someone is stationed there all day to keep watch, I suspect this situation will continue. So sad

Softening rhetoric in political dialogue has its place in order to avoid violence by the violent-prone among us. Beyond that, calls for softening the rhetoric are the perennial cry of the establishment, the advocates of the status quo, those who are up to no good, or those who are trying to placate or pander to them.
